

# VIII. The Problem with Trash

## WHAT?

Students investigate the decisions towns must make about disposing of solid waste.

## WHY?

- To describe the responsibilities a town has for properly disposing of solid waste
- To identify the problems towns have with waste issues
- To compare solutions towns use for disposing of solid waste
- To identify ways citizens can help with the disposing of solid waste
- To investigate recycling as one of the solutions towns have used to help with their problems of solid waste disposal

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

### *Geography:*

- Understand how people adapt to and modify their environment

### *Economics:*

- Understand the purposes of spending and saving money

### *Government:*

- Understand the purpose of a local government

### *Citizenship*

- Understand characteristics of good citizenship
- Understand the impact of individual and group decisions on communities in a democratic society
- Understand the importance of voluntary individual participation in the democratic process

### *Social Studies Skills:*

- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology
- Communicate effectively in a variety of forms.

## TAKS:

- Objective 2: Geographic Influences on Historical Issues and Events
- Objective 3: Economic Influences on Historical Issues and Events
- Objective 4: Political Influences on Historical Issues and Events
- Objective 5: Critical-Thinking Skills

## HOW?

### Materials needed:

- Drawing paper
- Markers
- Wall Map of Texas with a flag marking the location of the town of Crockett
- Plastic garbage bags
- Large cardboard boxes
- Work gloves
- Handout titled “How Important is Recycling?”
- Handout titled “What Can We Recycle?”
- Camera

Suggested teaching time: two class periods

### Suggested advanced planning:

- Prepare to either tell students their town’s recycling policies or arrange to have students investigate the policies by locating them on the Internet.
- Arrange for a safe area, such as a park or school ground, for students to pick up trash. Secure parental assistance.

### Suggested Procedures:

1. Brainstorm with students why it is important to keep a town clean.
2. Arrange students in groups or pairs to read the handout titled “How Important is Recycling?”
3. After reading the information, in their pairs or groups, students discuss the questions on the handout, draw conclusions and give reasons for their decision.
4. Have each group report on their decisions and reasons.
5. Take a class vote: “Should a town make a law forcing people to recycle?”
6. Either directly tell students or let them investigate to discover their town’s recycling policies.
7. Discuss the benefits of recycling and have students make posters informing people about recycling and encouraging them to do so. Use the handout titled “What Can We Recycle?” for a source of information for creating the posters.
8. Have students collect litter from a safe area and sort the litter according to disposable and recyclable items.
9. Using still and/or video cameras, take pictures before, during and after cleanup. Display them in the classroom.

**Follow-Up Possibilities:** Have students decide on and carry out a recycling program in their classroom and/or school.

**Evaluation:** Have the students write a letter to the editor of the newspaper explaining the benefits of keeping their town free of litter and of recycling.

Sources:

Newspaper article:

“Town turns trash into cash: Crockett’s recycling mandate helps curb collection costs.”  
*Houston Chronicle*. August 11, 2003.

Book:

*Let’s Reduce and Recycle: Curriculum for Solid Waste Awareness*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 1990

Web sites:

Planetpals – Friends for Earth  
[www.planetpals.com/index.html](http://www.planetpals.com/index.html)

Earth 911  
[www.earth911.org/master.asp](http://www.earth911.org/master.asp)